

Joelle Perna
Education Committee Testimony
RE: Education Funding Bills SB 948, SB 949 and SB 886
Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Good evening members of the committee. My name is Joelle Perna and I am a resident of Waterbury. I am also a parent of two young boys who attend Brass City Charter School.

Up until this year, my sons attended different local public schools. My older son attended Kingsbury Elementary School while my youngest was enrolled at Brass City Charter. This year, my eldest son was accepted into BCCS after having been on the waitlist. While I am thrilled to have both of my sons now attending BCCS, it is troubling that they will both be funded at a lower amount than their other Waterbury peers. It doesn't have to be this way. This legislative session I ask that you fight to ensure that all Connecticut children are funded under the same formula - this would be monumental in achieving equity for our kids! Parents would no longer have to struggle with the decision of having their child at the school that best suits them and having their child's education be funded fairly. My boys and their classmates' educations would finally be valued by the state in the same way as other students attending traditional public schools.

While traditional public school students are funded at the state's foundation amount for education of \$11,525, public charter school students receive only \$11,250. That is a \$275 difference per child based solely on which public school I choose to enroll them in. In addition to my youngest son at BCCS being funded below the "minimum wage" of education, he is also not eligible to receive additional weighted funding that so many students in our community need and deserve for their education.

I firmly believe that all children in Connecticut should be funded in a fair and equitable manner no matter which public school option they attend. Having choice in education is a great asset to families like mine because it allows my children to attend a school which can best serve them, and their needs. Why would the state block the success of these public charter school children by funding them below their traditional district counterparts?

Increased funding for all public schools would not only benefit my children at BCCS but would also impact all Waterbury students in a positive way. Students in Waterbury Public Schools would continue to receive the foundation amount and weighted funding but would also live in a community where all their peers are able to thrive. Although both my sons now attend BCCS, I still greatly value Waterbury Public Schools and am happy my son attended Kingsbury for some of his education. While my son was at Kingsbury I was highly involved with the PTO and the school and saw firsthand the disadvantages some students faced. With better funding for all public schools, schools like BCCS and Kingsbury can have a better opportunity to thrive, as will their students!

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